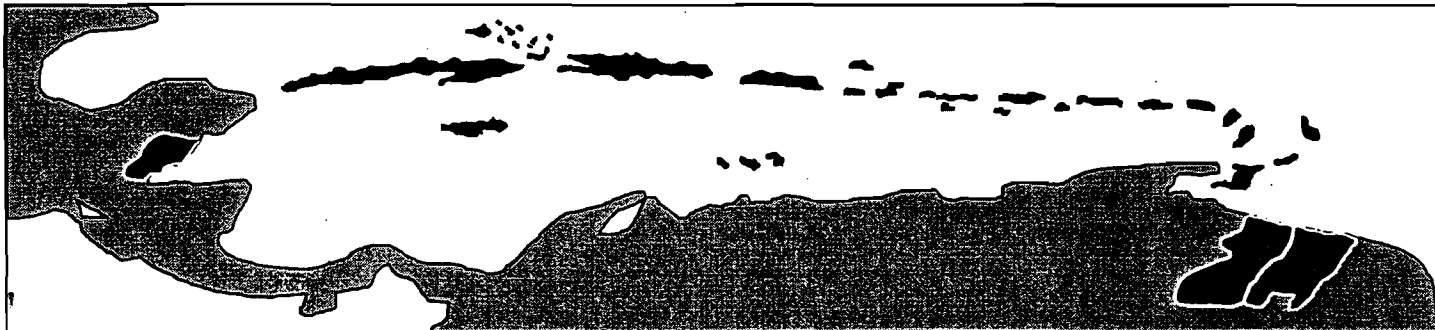




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ECLAC/CDCC Meeting for the
Establishment of an Ad Hoc Advisory
Panel for the Social Statistical Databases

GENERAL
LC/CAR/G.654 /c2
15 August 2001
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH



**REPORT ON THE MEETING FOR
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AD HOC ADVISORY PANEL
FOR THE SOCIAL STATISTICAL DATABASES**



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE

ECLAC/CDCC Meeting for the
Establishment of an Ad Hoc Advisory
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REPORT ON THE MEETING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AD HOC ADVISORY PANEL FOR THE SOCIAL STATISTICAL DATABASES

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) convened the first one-day meeting to establish an ad hoc advisory panel for the social statistical databases, 6 July 2001, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Attending the meeting were the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); Central Statistical Office (CSO), Saint Lucia; the Information Technology Consultant as well as staff members of the ECLAC/CDCC Social Development Unit, the Statistics Unit and the Documentation Centre. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

The agenda of the meeting was discussed and adopted as follows:

1. Introduction to this phase of the project
2. Identification of long-term and short-term objectives of the construction of the SSDS.
3. Specific activities of the project
 - Accessing of data
 - Input of data
 - Data security
 - Website development
4. Scheduling of activities
5. Closing

The meeting agreed on the following terms of reference for the ad hoc advisory panel, which were:

- (a) Advise on the work plan for the project;
- (b) Advise on the equipment to meet the needs of the project;
- (c) Advise on the architecture of the databases; and

- (d) Provide any other advice as may be required for the success of the process

Agenda item 1: Introduction to this phase of the project

Ms. Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Officer, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat welcomed participants to the meeting and also welcomed Mr. Kerwyn Martin Roach, to his first official activity as IT consultant for the project. She explained that this panel on the construction of social statistical databases was one of two advisory panels being established for the larger project entitled: The Development of Social Statistical Databases and a Methodological Approach for a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for Small Island Developing States. The other advisory panel would be for the establishment of a methodology for the development of a Social Vulnerability Index. Following a full briefing of the project, the meeting was informed of the agreement that the data would be housed at three hubs, which were:

- (a) The CARICOM Secretariat;
- (b) The Derek Gordon Databank, Mona Campus, University of the West Indies; and
- (c) The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Port of Spain. This would ensure redundancy for important data.

With regard to the collection of data for the construction of databases, Ms. Kambon informed the meeting that the project had targeted five member countries for the initial collection of data sets. These were Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. To date, all five of these countries have agreed to give the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat their social statistical micro-data from the period 1990 to current. In addition, Puerto Rico had already given their data for inclusion in this phase of the project. She also informed the meeting that Grenada had agreed to release data for this country arising out of the poverty studies supported by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). In order to facilitate this release, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat was already in receipt of the necessary documentation to be signed and returned to the Government of Grenada.

Agenda item 2: Identification of long-term and short-term
objectives for the construction of the SSDS

The following long-term and short-term objectives were agreed to at the meeting:

Long-term objectives

- (a) To be able to provide governments and senior technocrats with a body of social statistics that could be used in the formulation of social policy;
- (b) To develop a structure for the input of metadata for the databases;
and
- (c) To increase the number of countries represented in the databases.

Short-term objectives

- (a) To generate a series of social statistical reports that allow for analysis by the end of November;
- (b) To be able to describe the data and make recommendations for standardization; and
- (c) To establish a website that would link to the databases established at the three hubs, as well as to other databases for which permission has been given for such access.

Agenda item 3: Specific activities for the project

Accessing of data

The ECLAC Port of Spain Office has committed to collecting all data from the five countries, including a description of how indicators were derived by 20 July 2001. It was therefore agreed that Mr. Roach, IT Consultant, would be in touch with these countries immediately, to discuss issues relating to the format in which such data would be sent. The meeting also discussed and agreed on the hardware and software products that would be needed for this project. The consensus was that one server, two clients – a notebook and desktop, two printers – one colour and one black and white, and a scanner would be necessary. The meeting also discussed the need for additional bandwidth for shared use of the data and the need for software, possibly SQL for storing the data.

Input of data

The meeting discussed the various formats in which country data are usually found and the statistical software that would be useful for the project to acquire in order to deal with the various data sets that it intended to collect. Such software included Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS), IMPS and REDATAM. If possible, it was also suggested that the project could also acquire STATISTICA. Also necessary to the input of data was the need to acquire the data dictionaries for the data sets, where these were not a part of the software in which they were stored.

The importance of creating a metadata dictionary was also stressed and, in this context, the meeting spoke to the possibility of using the existing structure coming out of the GDDS project, sponsored by the IDB, for the metadata dictionary of this project. It was also stressed that, as part of the data collection process, ECLAC Port of Spain should collect all published and electronic copies that told of how the indicators were derived.

With respect to the data hub to be created at CARICOM, it was understood that CARICOM would not be creating the modalities to store the databases until the size of datasets and the need for capacity was fully understood. In the meantime CARICOM would link into the constructed databases at ECLAC, Port of Spain.

Data security

The need for additional bandwidth in order to ensure fast and easy access by clients to the database was discussed. External hosting was discarded, since data was considered to be too sensitive to be hosted by an external party. The meeting also discussed the use of passwords as one method of allowing access to the data at different levels. A protocol that involved getting permission directly from countries for the use of their data was also one of the features that was suggested to ensure that countries retained ownership and management of their data.

Website development

Ms. Kambon informed the meeting that the project intended to contract a website designer for the publication of the database on the Internet. In this regard, the meeting was advised that only the published tables of the countries ought to be placed on the website in order to avoid discrepancies between national figures and calculated figures coming out of the project. Other ideas relating to the use of the database, including marketing and cost recovery for sustainability, were raised at the meeting.

Agenda item 4: Scheduling of activities

(a) The collection of data from the five countries is to be completed by 20 July 2001;

(b) Acquisition of hardware and software to be completed by the end of August 2001;

(c) Data manager for the input of data and maintenance of the database due to start work by 3 September 2001; and

(d) Ad Hoc Advisory Panel to meet again in early September.

Agenda item 5: Closing

Ms. Kambon thanked participants for their input and said that by the next meeting the panel would be in a more informed position to address the issues having to do with data security and website design.

The meeting ended with the usual exchange of courtesies.

Annex 1

List of participants

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ECLAC system

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